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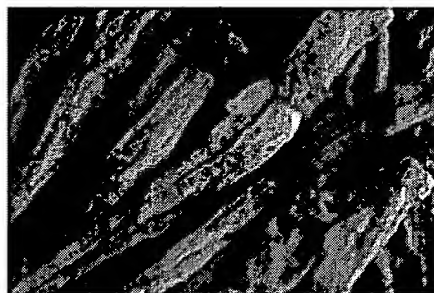
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Ginseng  
*Panax ginseng*



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Ginseng has been used for more than two millennia in China, where the earliest written description of its use appeared in a medical book written during the Han dynasty, before a.d. 100.

At that time, the expert recommended it for "repairing the five viscera, quietening the spirit, curbing the emotion, stopping agitation, removing noxious influence, brightening the eyes, enlightening the mind, and increasing the wisdom."

It has been a favorite tonic in China ever since then. In 1714, Père Jartoux, a Jesuit missionary who had spent time in Beijing, predicted that "any European who understands pharmacy" would be able to study its chemistry and adapt it as an excellent medicine.

Although the chemistry has been studied, the pharmacology is complicated and elusive. European science still has not been able to explain why the Chinese treasure it so much. Much of the research seems to yield contradictory results.

Traditional Chinese medicine uses a completely different theoretical system. There ginseng is understood as a yang tonic that can increase strength, promote life and appetite, and overcome general debility, blocked qi (pronounced chee), and impotence.

There are several species of ginseng as well as different preparations that strongly influence the quality of the herb.

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American ginseng (*Panax quinquefolius*) is prized in Asia because it is sweeter tasting (rather than sweet-bitter like *Panax ginseng*) and is considered more yin (cooler) in nature. *Panax notoginseng*, or sanchi ginseng, is a dwarf variety that is sometimes substituted.

Regardless of species, the part of the plant used is the root. It should be collected in autumn from a plant five or six years old.

Ginseng root may be fresh (preferably at least six years old), "white" ginseng root prepared by simple drying, or red ginseng root prepared by steaming first prior to drying.

Processing methods alter the composition of the final product.

With ginseng drawing prices as high as \$500 per wild-crafted root, it is little wonder that adulteration is a concern. Ginseng has become increasingly popular in the United States, with six million people taking it, but some ginseng products on the American market contain very little verifiable ginseng activity.

The American Botanical Council has undertaken a study of many proprietary products and found significant differences among them.

#### Active Ingredients

Ginseng is full of saponins termed ginsenosides. Approximately thirty of these compounds have been identified, and they appear to be responsible for most of the activity of ginseng. Their chemical structures are similar to those of steroids such as testosterone and estrogen.

The picture is complex, however. Not only do the various species and forms of ginseng have different ginsenoside profiles, the ginsenosides themselves have differing and sometimes opposing actions.

Ginsenoside Rb1, for example, seems to lead to sedation and lower blood pressure, while ginsenoside Rg1 acts as a stimulant and raises blood pressure.

These distinct pharmacological activities and the variation in composition from one piece of ginseng root to another, depending on variety, growing conditions, and processing, probably explain why research results on ginseng are inconsistent. Some commercial products are standardized to 4 percent ginsenosides and others to 7 percent.

Other ingredients of ginseng root may also have important activity. They include essential oil, phytosterol, carbohydrates, amino acids, peptides, vitamins, minerals, and some other ingredients.

Nonsaponin constituents appear to be responsible for the ability of Korean red ginseng root to lower blood sugar in diabetics.

Still other compounds may be responsible for ginseng's apparent ability to stimulate nitric oxide formation, which may explain certain other of its traditional actions, including its reputed ability to help combat impotence.

### Uses

The most common use of ginseng in Chinese medicine was (and perhaps still is) as a general tonic, and scientists have devoted a certain amount of effort to studying ginseng as an "adaptogen."

This category, which doesn't correspond to any widely used pharmaceuticals, implies that ginseng is helpful in counteracting stress.

Indeed, some researchers believe that the benefits of an adaptogen are apparent only when the organism has been stressed to its limits. Despite this, in a well-designed placebo-controlled study, ginseng ingestion for up to ninety-six days did not protect rats exposed to a highly stressful situation, having to swim in cold water.

In animals, ginseng is sedative at low doses and a stimulant at high doses. To some extent this is related to the effects of the different ginsenosides.

Ginsenoside Rb1 has a sedative effect and lowers blood pressure. It also has anticonvulsant and analgesic activity, lowers fever and has some anti-inflammatory action.

Ginsenoside Rg1, on the other hand, is a stimulant and raises blood pressure at low doses, while at higher doses it has more sedative activity. At stimulant doses it can also aggravate ulcers and accelerates learning in animals.

Some studies of humans have shown that ginseng standardized extracts can help people react more quickly to both visual and auditory cues, increase concentration, and improve hand-eye coordination. Not all studies have reached similar conclusions.

Ginseng can change body biochemistry, and a careful study of fifty male physical education teachers demonstrated that they were able to do significantly more work (defined in kilogram-meters) after ginseng administration than after placebo.

Maximum oxygen uptake was higher. Holding workload constant, the teachers consumed less oxygen, produced less lactate in their muscles, and had lower heart rates when they had been given ginseng.

A number of other studies have also found that ginseng increased aerobic capacity, reduced lactate levels in the blood, and lowered heart rate during exercise. Many of these studies,

however, did not include placebo controls.

Animal studies demonstrate that ginseng extracts can have a protective effect when used to pretreat small mammals undergoing radiation.

Italian pharmacologists have found that pretreatment with a standard ginseng extract (G115) significantly improved immune response to vaccination against influenza compared to placebo pretreatment.

Some glycosides found in red ginseng appear to act as antioxidants. This property might be the foundation for the anticancer effect seen in one study of mice exposed to cancer-causing chemicals.

Those who were given extract of six-year-old red ginseng in their drinking water developed significantly fewer lung tumors after injection with benzo(a)pyrene, a strong carcinogen. Fresh four-year-old ginseng was not protective.

An epidemiological study in Korea suggested that people who use ginseng regularly may be less likely to come down with cancer, but further studies are needed.

Ginseng is reported to lower cholesterol, presumably by accelerating its metabolism and removal from the body. Studies in chickens indicate that low-density lipoprotein (sometimes termed "bad cholesterol") is especially affected.

Ginsenoside Rg2 can keep blood platelets from aggregating, and ginsenoside Ro prevents fibrinogen from being converted to fibrin, an important clotting factor.

At least one active ginseng component inhibits thromboxane and thus might contribute to an anticoagulant effect.

In animals, extracts of Korean red ginseng have helped to control diabetes. One double-blind Finnish study considered the effects of ginseng extract on newly diagnosed human diabetics (non-insulin-dependent).

The investigators found that ginseng improved patients' mood and increased their sense of well-being. People taking ginseng, but not those on placebo treatment, had lower fasting blood glucose and more normal glycosylated hemoglobin levels. Further studies in this field are needed.

#### Dose

Dose varies depending on the preparation used. A tea may be prepared from teaspoon of dried root (1.75 gm) taken once or, at most, twice daily.

Studies have used doses of 100, 200, 250, or 500 mg of various extract preparations. If there are dosing instructions on the label, they should be followed.

Traditionally, ginseng root is used for extended periods. Some authorities recommend three to four weeks; others specify up to three months.

One standardized product, Ginsana, is the extract G115 that has been used in a number of studies.

### Special Precautions

Although ginseng is considered appropriate for pregnant women and newborn babies in many Asian cultures, too little information is available to determine if it is safe.

Because of the research showing that ginseng can lower blood sugar, diabetics should carefully monitor blood sugar while taking ginseng.

### Adverse Effects

Ginseng appears to be extremely safe. More than six million Americans take it, not to mention uncounted Chinese people over the centuries, and very few appear to have had any trouble. Insomnia has been a side effect in some of the placebo-controlled studies. In many studies no side effects are reported.

Other side effects are controversial. Too often, the identity and purity of the herbal product are not determined, or there may be confounding factors.

One death is attributed to a ginseng product contaminated with ma huang (ephedra). One survey found that people using large doses of ginseng for two years or more complained of diarrhea, sleeplessness, nervousness, high blood pressure, and skin problems, although they maintained that ginseng use made them more alert and better able to cope.

Many of them were also taking high doses of caffeine and other substances, so it is not possible to sort out whether any of these side effects are truly due to ginseng overdose.

One brief report from Paris concerned a law student who developed a sore throat and took antibiotics for several days. Then, with final exams looming, he turned to ginseng as he would have in his native China.

Within a week he had developed a serious skin reaction known as Stevens-Johnson syndrome and had to be hospitalized. Stevens-Johnson syndrome is sometimes lethal. Fortunately, he recovered completely within thirty days.

The doctors who treated him did not have the ginseng preparation analyzed, but they speculated that it might have been adulterated with a nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drug that could have been responsible for the reaction. They did not consider the antibiotics a potential trigger, although

Stevens-Johnson syndrome is a rare but established reaction to some antibiotics.

It is prudent to stop ginseng and seek medical attention if a rash or major skin redness develops while taking the herb.

Other side effects that have cropped up in ginseng users are breast pain in one woman and vaginal bleeding in another woman seventy-two years of age.

#### Possible Interactions

Despite research suggesting that ginseng might reduce platelet aggregation, the only reported interaction with Coumadin resulted in a decreased INR (a measure of blood's propensity to clot).

This suggests that ginseng may counteract Coumadin's benefit. People taking this or other anticoagulant medications such as aspirin, Plavix, or Ticlid should exercise caution or avoid taking ginseng. Please discuss your use of ginseng with your physician.

Another potential drug interaction involved a Spanish woman who was taking lithium and amitriptyline for depression. She discontinued these medications and immediately began taking ginseng instead. Within two weeks she suffered a manic episode and was hospitalized.

Her physicians blamed the ginseng, but it may be difficult to determine whether an interaction with the antidepressants or their discontinuation contributed to the manic reaction.

Using ginseng together with the MAO inhibitor phenelzine (Nardil) has also resulted in mania.

A potentially fatal interaction was reported in a man with severe kidney disease. Ten days after he began taking a ginseng preparation that also contained germanium, he was hospitalized with severe edema and high blood pressure.

In the hospital, where he did not have access to his dietary supplements, his diuretic started working again. He lost twenty-five pounds of fluid, and his blood pressure dropped. But after discharge, he resumed taking supplements and once more wound up with fluid retention and hypertension.

The physicians from Vanderbilt and the Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Memphis where he was treated hypothesized that the germanium in the supplements damaged the already compromised kidney and interfered with the action of the furosemide (Lasix).

There is no way to determine whether ginseng itself might have interacted with the man's medications, furosemide and cyclosporine.

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## Asian Ginseng (*Panax ginseng* C.A. Meyer)

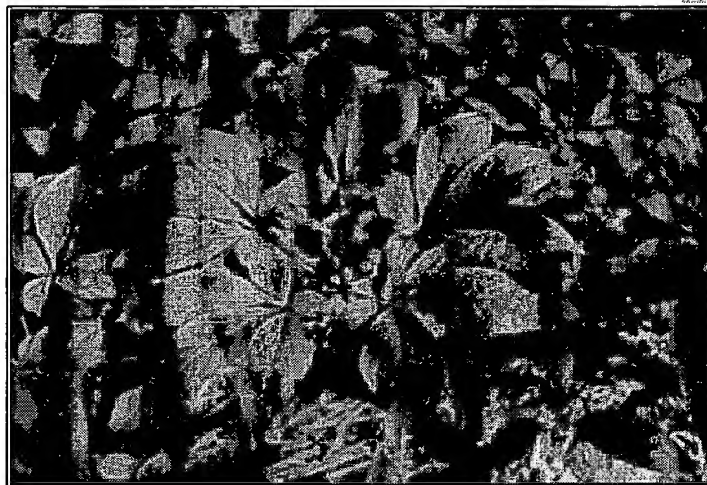


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**Common names:** Korean ginseng, Chinese ginseng

**Parts used and where grown:** Asian ginseng is a member of the Araliaceae family, which also includes the closely related American ginseng, *Panax quinquefolius*, and less similar Siberian ginseng, *Eleutherococcus senticosus*, also known as eleuthero. Asian ginseng commonly grows on mountain slopes and is usually harvested in the fall. The root is used.

### In what conditions might Asian ginseng be supportive?

- |                                   |                             |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| • <u>aerobic capacity</u>         | • <u>diabetes</u>           |
| • <u>Alzheimer's disease</u>      | • <u>fibromyalgia</u>       |
| • <u>atherosclerosis</u>          | • <u>HIV support</u>        |
| • <u>athletic support</u>         | • <u>infection</u>          |
| • <u>chemotherapy support</u>     | • <u>infertility (male)</u> |
| • <u>chronic fatigue syndrome</u> | • <u>influenza (flu)</u>    |
| • <u>common cold/sore throat</u>  | • <u>stress</u>             |

**Historical or traditional use:** Asian ginseng has been a part of Chinese medicine for over 2,000 years. The first reference to the health-enhancing use of Asian ginseng dates to the first century AD, in which the writer mentions ginseng's use as follows: "It is used for repairing the five viscera, quieting the spirit, curbing the emotion, stopping agitation, removing noxious influence, brightening the eyes, enlightening the mind and increasing wisdom. Continuous use leads one to longevity with light weight." Ginseng was commonly used by elderly persons in the Orient to improve mental and physical vitality.

**Active constituents:** Ginseng's actions in the body are due to a complex interplay of constituents. The primary group are the ginsenosides, which are believed to increase energy, counter the effects of stress, and enhance intellectual and physical performance. Thirteen ginsenosides have been identified in Asian

ginseng. Ginsenosides Rg1 and Rb1 have received the most attention.<sup>1</sup>

Other constituents include the panaxans, which help lower blood sugar, and the polysaccharides (complex sugar molecules) which support immune function.<sup>2</sup>

**How much should I take?** The best researched form of ginseng are standardized herbal extracts that supply approximately 4-7% ginsenosides, more concentrated extracts may be less effective due to reduction of panaxan levels. People often take 100-200 mg per day. Non-standardized extracts require a higher intake, generally 1-2 grams per day for tablets or 2-3 ml for fresh herb tincture. Ginseng is usually used for two to three weeks continuously, followed by a one to two week "rest" period before resuming.



**Are there any side effects or interactions?** Used at the recommended dosage, ginseng is generally safe. In rare instances, it may cause overstimulation and possibly insomnia. Consuming caffeine with ginseng increases the risk of over-stimulation and gastrointestinal upset. Persons with uncontrolled high blood pressure should not use ginseng. Long-term use of ginseng may cause menstrual abnormalities and breast tenderness in some women. Ginseng is not recommended for pregnant or lactating women.

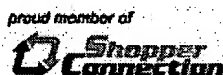
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## Ginseng

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*Panax spp.*

**Habitat:** *Panax Ginseng* is native to China and cultivated extensively in China, Korea, Japan and Russia. *Panax quinquefolia* is native to North America.

**Part Used:** Root.

### Constituents:

- Saponin glycosides. These are referred to as the ginsenosides by Japanese & panaxosides by Russian workers. At least 13 ginsenosides have been isolated; these are designated ginsenosides Ra, Rb, Rg-1, Rg-2 etc.
- Glycans; the panaxans A-E, isolated only so far from *P. ginseng*.
- Volatile oil, containing b-elemene, a diene panaxynol, and two acetylenic compounds, panaxydol and panaxytriol, falcariol and falcarietriol.

**Actions:** Adaptogen, Tonic, Stimulant, Hypoglycaemic.

**Indications:** Ginseng has an ancient history and as such has accumulated much folklore about its actions and uses. The genus name *Panax* derives from the latin *panacea* meaning 'cure all'. Many of the claims that surround it are, unfortunately, exaggerated but it is clear that this is an important remedy. A powerful adaptogen, it has a wide range of possible therapeutic uses. For a more detailed discussion of adaptogens please refer to pages 3 - 113 to 3 - 118. The best therapeutic application is with weak or elderly people, where the adaptogenic and stimulating properties are can be profoundly useful. It should not be used indiscriminately as the stimulating properties can be contra-indicated in some pathologies, for example Chinese herbalism warns about Ginseng being used in acute inflammatory disease and bronchitis.

*Ellingwood* describes the eclectic use of *Panax* thus: "It is a mild sedative and tonic to the nerve centers, improving their tone, if persisted in, and increasing the capillary circulation of the brain. It is given in cerebral anaemia, and if combined with other tonics is capable of doing some good. It is also prescribed in the failure of digestion incident to nervous prostration and general nerve irritation."

**Preparations & Dosage:** The root is often chewed or a decoction may be made. Put 1/2 teaspoonful of the powdered root in a cup of water, bring to the boil and simmer gently for 10 minutes. This should be drunk three times a day.

*Herbal Materia Medica*

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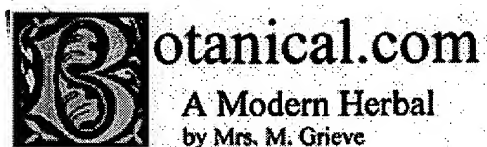
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# Ginseng

**Botanical:** *Panax quinquefolium* (LINN.)

**Family:** N.O. Araliaceae

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---**Synonyms**---*Aralia quinquefolia*. Five Fingers. Tartar Root. Red Berry. Man's Health.

---**Part Used**---Root.

---**Habitat**---Ginseng is distinguished as Asiatic or Chinese Ginseng. It is a native of Manchuria, Chinese Tartary and other parts of eastern Asia, and is largely cultivated there as well as in Korea and Japan.

*Panax*, the generic name, is derived from the Greek *Panacos* (a panacea), in reference to the miraculous virtue ascribed to it by the Chinese, who consider it a sovereign remedy in almost all diseases.

It was formerly supposed to be confined to Chinese Tartary, but now is known to be also a native of North America, from whence Sarrasin transmitted specimens to Paris in 1704.

The word ginseng is said to mean 'the wonder of the world.'

---**Description**---The plant grows in rich woods throughout eastern and central North America, especially along the mountains from Quebec and Ontario, south to Georgia. It was used by the North American Indians. It is a smooth perennial herb, with a large, fleshy, very slow-growing root, 2 to 3 inches in length (occasionally twice this size) and from 1/2 to 1 inch in thickness. Its main portion is spindle-shaped and heavily annulated (ringed growth), with a roundish summit, often with a slight terminal, projecting point. At the lower end of this straight portion, there is a narrower continuation, turned obliquely outward in the opposite direction and a very small branch is occasionally borne in the fork between the two. Some small rootlets exist upon the lower portion. The colour ranges from a pale yellow to a brownish colour. It has a mucilaginous sweetness, approaching that of liquorice, accompanied with some degree of bitterness and a slight aromatic warmth, with little or no smell. The stem is simple and erect, about a foot high, bearing three leaves, each divided into five finely-toothed leaflets, and a single, terminal umbel, with a few small, yellowish flowers. The fruit is a cluster of bright red berries.

The plant was first introduced into England in 1740 by the botanist Collinson.

Chinese Ginseng is a larger plant, but presents practically the same appearance and habits of growth. Its culture in the United States has never been attempted, though it would appear to be a promising field for experiment.

Father Jartoux, who had special privileges accorded him in the study of this plant, says that it is held in such esteem by the natives of China, that the physicians deem it a necessity in all their best prescriptions, and regard it as a remediable agency in fatigue and the infirmities of old age. Only the

Emperor has the right to collect the roots. The prepared root is chewed by the sick to recover health, and by the healthy to increase their vitality; it is said to remove both mental and bodily fatigue, to cure pulmonary complaints, dissolves tumours and prolongs life to a ripe old age.

Father Jartoux was satisfied that its praise was justified, and he adds his own testimony to its efficacy in relieving fatigue and increasing vitality. The roots are called, by the natives of China, *Jin-chen*, meaning 'like a man,' in reference to their resemblance to the human form. The American Indian name for the plant, *garantoquen*, has the same meaning.

Owing to the enormous demand for the root in China recourse was had to the American species, *Panax quinquefolium* (Linn.), and in 1718 the Jesuits of Canada began shipping the roots to China, and the first shipment from North America to Canton yielded enormous profits. In 1748 the roots sold at a dollar a pound in America and nearly five in China. Afterwards, the price fluctuated, but the root is still eagerly purchased by Chinese traders for export to China, and at the present time commands a yet higher price in the American markets, though it is not an official medicine and has only a place in the eclectic *Materia Medica*. The American Consul at Amoy stated a few years ago that it is possible to market twenty million dollars worth of American Ginseng annually to China, if it could be produced; but since its collection for exportation, it has been so eagerly sought that it has become exterminated in many districts where it was formerly abundant.

This has led to its cultivation and to various devices for preserving the natural supply. In Canada a fine is imposed for collecting between January and the 1st of September. Among the Indians, it is customary to collect the root only after the maturity of the fruit and to bend down the stem before digging the root, thus providing for its propagation. Indian collectors assert that a large number of such seeds will germinate, and that they have been able to increase their area of collection by this method.

In 1876, 550,624 lb. were exported at an average price of 1 dollar 17 cents; the amount available for export since then has steadily decreased and the price has gone up in proportion, till in 1912 the export was only 155,308 lb., at an average price of 7 dollars 20 cents per pound.

[[Top](#)]

---**Cultivation**---On account of the growing scarcity of the American Ginseng plant, experiments have been made by the State of Pennsylvania to determine whether it can be grown profitably, resulting in the conclusion that in five years, starting with seeds and one year plants (or sooner if a start were made with older plants), an acre of ground would yield a profit of 1,500 dollars, without allowance for rental, but many precautions are necessary for success. The cultivated plants produced larger roots than those of the wild plant.

In 1912 it was estimated that the acreage of cultivated Ginseng in the United States was about 150 acres, and it is calculated that to supply China with twenty million dollars' worth of dry root would require the American growers to plant 1,000 acres annually for five years, before this estimated annual supply could be sold. The cultivation of Ginseng would therefore appear to offer a rich field to American agriculture. It presents, however, considerable difficulty, owing to the great care and special methods required and to the fact that it is a very slow-growing crop, so that rapid returns can hardly be anticipated, and it is doubtful if its cultivation can be carried on profitably except by specialists in the crop. None the less, the percentage returns for the industrious, patient and painstaking farmer are large, and the demand for a fine article for export is not at all likely to be exceeded by the supply.

For successful cultivation of Ginseng in America, it is stated that a loose, rich soil, with a heavy mulch of leaves and about 80 per cent shade - generally provided artificially is necessary.

It is difficult to cultivate it here with success. A rich compost is necessary. Most of the species of this genus need greenhouse treatment in this country. Propagation by cuttings of the roots is the most successful method, the cuttings being placed in sand, under a handglass. Seeds, generally obtained from abroad, are sown in pots in the early spring and require gentle heat. When the plants are a few inches high, they must be transplanted into beds or sheltered borders. They require a good, warm soil, but much

shade. To grow on a commercial basis is not considered feasible in this country.

**---Harvesting, Preparation for Market---**The root should be collected only in the autumn, in which case it retains its plump and handsome appearance after drying. It is much more highly prized when of a fine light colour, which it is more apt to assume when grown in deep, black, fresh mould.

The best root is said to be that collected by the Sioux Indian women, who impart this white appearance by rotating it with water in a partly-filled barrel, through which rods are run in a longitudinal direction. In no other way, it is said, can the surface be so thoroughly and safely cleansed.

The structure of the root is fleshy and somewhat elastic and flexible, and it is of a firm, solid consistence if collected at the proper time and properly cured. The bark is very thick, yellowish-white, radially striate in old roots and contains brownish-red resin cells. The wood is strongly and coarsely radiate, with yellowish wood wedges and whitish rays.

The best roots for the Chinese market are sometimes submitted before being dried to a process of clarification, which renders them yellow, semi-transparent and of a horny appearance and enhances their value. This condition is gained by first plunging them in hot water, brushing until thoroughly scoured and steaming over boiling seed. Its commercial value is determined in a high degree by its appearance. The roots are valued in accordance with their large size and light colour, their plumpness and fine consistence, their unbroken and natural form, and above all by the perfectly developed condition of the branches.

**---Constituents---**A large amount of starch and gum, some resin, a very small amount of volatile oil and the peculiar sweetish body, Panaquilon. This occurs as a yellow powder, precipitating with water a white, amorphous substance, which has been called Panacon.

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**---Medicinal Action and Uses---**Panax is not official in the British Pharmacopoeia, and it was dismissed from the United States Pharmacopoeia at a late revision. It is cultivated almost entirely for export to China.

In China, both varieties are used particularly for dyspepsia, vomiting and nervous disorders. A decoction of 1/2 oz. of the root, boiled in tea or soup and taken every morning, is commonly held a remedy for consumption and other diseases.

In Western medicine, it is considered a mild stomachic tonic and stimulant, useful in loss of appetite and in digestive affections that arise from mental and nervous exhaustion.

A tincture has been prepared from the genuine Chinese or American root, dried and coarsely powdered, covered with five times its weight of alcohol and allowed to stand, well-stoppered, in a dark, cool place, being shaken twice a day. The tincture, poured off and filtered, has a clear, light-lemon colour, an odour like the root and a taste at first bitter, then dulcamarous and an acid reaction.

**---Substitutes---**A substitute for Ginseng, somewhat employed in China, is the root of *Codonopsis Tangshen*, a bell-flowered plant, used by the poor as a substitute for the costly Ginseng.

Ginseng is sometimes accidentally collected with Senega Root (*Polygala Senega*, Linn.) and with Virginian Snake Root (*Aristolochia Serpentina*, Linn.), but is easily detected, being less wrinkled and twisted and yellower in colour. It is occasionally found with the collected root of *Cypripedium parviflorum* (Salis) and *Stylophorum diphyllum* (Nuttall).

Blue Cohosh (*Caulophyllum thalictroides*, Linn.) is often called locally in the United States 'Blue' or 'Yellow Ginseng,' and Fever Root (*Triosteum perfoliatum*, Linn.) also is sometimes given the name of Ginseng.



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Ginseng is the most famous Chinese herb. It is the most widely recognized plant used in traditional medicine. Various forms of ginseng have been used in medicine for more than 7000 years. Several species grow around the world, and though some are preferred for specific benefits, all are considered to have similar properties as an effective general rejuvenator.

The name panax is derived from the Greek word panacea meaning, "all healing" and the benefits of ginseng are recognized as such. Ginseng is commonly used as an adaptogen, meaning it normalizes physical functioning depending on what the individual needs (for example, it will lower high blood pressure, but raise low blood pressure).

It is also used to reduce the effects of stress, improve performance, boost energy levels, enhance memory, and stimulate the immune system. Oriental medicine has deemed ginseng a necessary element in all their best prescriptions, and regards it as prevention and a cure. It is said to remove both mental and bodily fatigue, cure pulmonary complaints, dissolve tumors and reduce the effects of age.

Ginseng is native to China, Russia, North Korea, Japan, and some areas of North America. It was first cultivated in the United States in the late 1800's. It is difficult to grow and takes 4-6 years to become mature enough to harvest. The roots are called Jin-chen, meaning 'like a man,' in reference to their resemblance to the shape of the human body.

Native North Americans considered it one of their most sacred herbs and add it to many herbal formulas to make them more potent. The roots can live for over 100 years.

Ginseng contains vitamins A, B-6 and the mineral Zinc, which aids in the production of thymic hormones, necessary for the functioning of the defense system. The main active ingredients of ginseng are the more than 25 saponin triterpenoid glycosides called "ginsenosides". These steroid-like ingredients provide the adaptogenic properties that enable ginseng to balance and counter the effects of stress. The glycosides appear to act on the adrenal glands, helping to prevent adrenal hypertrophy and excess corticosteroid production in response to physical, chemical or biological stress.

Studies done in China showed that ginsenosides also increase protein synthesis and activity of neurotransmitters in the brain. Ginseng is used to restore memory, and enhance concentration and cognitive abilities, which may be impaired by improper blood supply to the brain.

Ginseng helps to maintain excellent body functions. Siberian ginseng has been shown to increase energy, stamina, and help the body resist viral infections and environmental toxins. Research has shown specific effects that support the central nervous system, liver function, lung function and circulatory system.

Animal studies have shown that ginseng extracts stimulate the production of interferons, increase natural killer cell activity, lower cholesterol and decrease triglyceride levels. Men have used the herb to improve sexual function and remedy impotence. Ginseng is believed to increase estrogen levels in women and is used to treat menopausal symptoms.

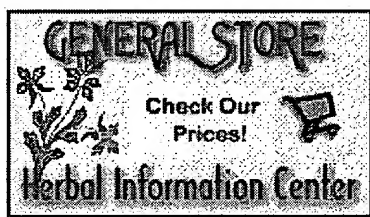
It is also used for diabetes, radiation and chemotherapy protection, colds, chest problems, to aid in sleep, and to stimulate the appetite.

**Part used:** Whole root. Powdered in capsules, as an ingredient in many herbal formulas, and as a tea.

**Common Use:** Ginseng is one of the most popular healing herbs used today throughout the world. It increases mental and physical efficiency and resistance to stress and disease. Ginseng's adaptogenic qualities help balance the body, depending on the individual's needs. It is known to normalize blood pressure, increase blood circulation and aid in the prevention of heart disease.

**Care:** A perennial herb with a large, slow growing root. Requires a loose, rich soil, with a heavy mulch of leaves and only 20% sun.

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[The Ginsengs : A User's Guide by Christopher Hobbs](#)

[The Ginseng Book : Nature's Ancient Healer by Stephen Fulder, Phd](#)

[Ginseng : How to Find, Grow, and Use America's Forest Gold](#)

[The Book of Ginseng : And Other Chinese Herbs for Vitality by Stephen, Ph.D. Fulder](#)

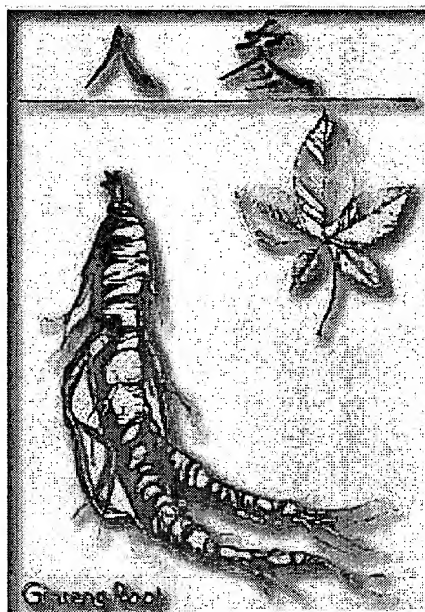


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## REN SHEN

[*panax ginseng*]

Called the "King of Herbs", ginseng is the most well known herb of all time to longevity enthusiasts. The Taoists say that ginseng has the strongest ability of any herb to condense the earthly ch'i and the five elemental energies into its root. Thus it can impart the "three vitalities" (ch'i, jing and shin) to anyone who partakes of it. Ginseng is revered for its ability to impart a clarity and awareness to its users. In the first recorded Chinese treatise on herbs, Shen Nung said: "Ginseng is a tonic to the five viscera, quieting the animal spirits, stabilizing the soul, preventing fear, expelling the vicious energies, brightening the eye and improving vision, opening up the heart benefiting the understanding, and if taken for some time will invigorate the body and prolong life..."

Ginseng root is said to aid in replacing ch'i to the meridians and organs. It develops the center (earth element) and supplies an adaptability to stressful situations. Its name means "essence of the earth in the form of a man". The chief constituents of ginseng are largely long chain polysaccharides, saponins, ginsenosides, panoxyc acid, panaxin, panaquilon, elemental minerals, and some B vitamins as well as other substances. Over 28 of the ginsenosides discovered in the past few years in research have been used in studies proving ginseng's great value to health and long life.

There are three major types of ginseng Chinese, American and Korean. There are in addition other types such as Viet Nameese. Of the Chinese there are three general types, Yi Sun, Shiu Chu and Kirin. Yi Sun is very rare and quite expensive in the U.S. Yi Sun are roots that are found very young in the wild that are removed to cultivated beds and grown to "maturity" and then harvested for sale. These are the most potent roots available except for the wild roots that are becoming unattainable.

The Shiu Chu roots are usually five or six years old and probably the best deal one could expect to procure if under ten dollars an ounce. Kirin ginseng is the lowest quality and is usually used for extracting or capsules. There are also many roots from districts that have become well known such as Ji Lin. American (Xi Yang) ginseng and Asian roots are considered quite distinct in their actions. White American being more yin, reducing the heat of the lungs and respiratory systems. It is considered less potent than Chinese ginseng and is used in respiratory conditions as well as weakness and fever. Many people use the American ginseng to balance the hot, yang effects of the Chinese. Saponins are considered to be the chief constituents of ginseng with many other elements

being shown in research to be just as important. The ability to aid in stress and action as an adaptogen has brought ginseng into the spotlight of modern herb consumers and has spurred much research. This latest research has shown these saponins (termed 'ginsenosides') to be: "analgesic, anti-inflammatory, tranquilizing, hypotensive, anti-convulsant, a regulator of blood sugar, an aid to the digestion and also anti-psychotic and anti-convulsant"

In addition to the alterative effect on the entire body, ginseng has a very beneficial effect on the heart and circulation, modulating not only blood pressure but blood cholesterol as well. It stimulates the secretion of pepsin and relieves indigestion and eructations. Ginseng is used generally for its tonic and adaptogenic benefits and its ability to increase strength and energy as well as its reported use as a longevity herb. Taoists have used it for hundreds of years for quieting the spirit much like Reishi Mushroom. In Russia ginseng is recommended to people over the age of forty for a six week program of use annually.



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## PANAX

### Synonyms

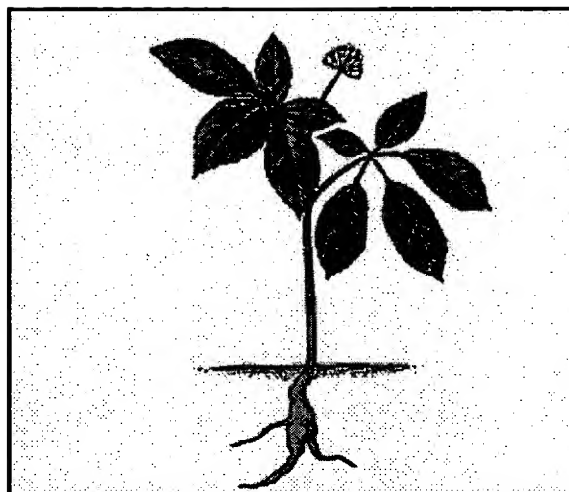
Ginseng; Schinseng; Ninjin; Jintsam

### Definitions:

Panax consists of the roots of *Panax schinseng* Nees (*Panax ginseng* CA Meyer), (Fam. Araliaceae). It is indigenous to Eastern Asia and is cultivated in China, Korea and Japan. It contains steroidal glycosides known as panaxosides or ginsenosides which on extraction or drying may be hydrolysed and the aglycones converted to panaxadiols and panaxatriols.

Martindale 27th Edn., p. 1763.

Merck Index 9th Edn., 4256.



### Description:

#### Macroscopical:

Fusiform or cylindrical pieces 6-10 cm long and 0.5-2 cm wide. Externally light-yellow-brown, annular in the upper portion, terminated at the crown by one or more stem scars. Lower portion longitudinally wrinkled and marked by a number of root scars. Fracture short, internal surface light yellow-brown, marked by a distinct brown cambium line, radiate wood, oil secretion canals in the cortex. Odour slightly aromatic; taste initially sweet and then slightly bitter.

#### Microscopical:

Pale yellow-brown powder consisting of oval parenchyma cells packed with starch grains 0.5-1 mm in diameter and occasional cluster crystals of calcium oxalate. Yellow-brown resinous canals and rectangular cells of medullary rays. Spiral and reticulate vessels slightly lignified; fragments of polygonal cork cells.

#### Total Ash

■ **Total Ash:** Not more than 5%.

■ **Acid Insoluble Ash:** Not more than 2%.

#### Therapeutics:

##### ■ **Action:**

Thymoleptic. Sedative Demulcent Stomachic Reputed to be Aphrodisiac.

##### ■ **Indications:**

Neurasthenia. Neuralgia. Insomnia. Hypotonia.

**■ Specific Indications:**

Depressive states associated with sexual inadequacy.

**■ Combinations Used:** May be combined with Turnera and Serenoa in glandular weakness.

**■ Preparations and Dosage:**

(thrice daily)

**Dried Root:** Dose 1-2 g or by decoction.

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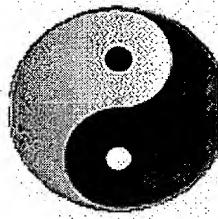


## *History of Ginseng*



*Ginseng: An Ancient Medicinal Root.*





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## History of Ginseng

### Ginseng: An Ancient Medicinal Root.

For thousands of years ginseng root has been a valued medicinal herb in traditional oriental healing. References to ginseng can be found in writings dating back over two millennia. There are mentions of ginseng use during the Qin and Han dynasties, 221 BC - 220 AD.

Often coveted by the Asian royalty and military aristocracy, ginseng has been a rare and treasured herb with a medicinal association stretching far back into the ancient traditions of long past ages. Ginseng was known to be a potent source of vitality, longevity; and equally important to the Eastern philosophy it sharpened the mind and memory, and restored the body's natural balance of chi, or elemental energy.

Eastern medicine, and particularly Chinese traditions, are deeply involved in the concept of Yin and Yang, representing the balance of the universe. In order to prevent or cure disease this same balance was necessary in the body, and ginseng was used to help restore and maintain that balance. Interestingly enough, modern western science now accepts ginseng as an adaptogen, a modern term which essentially means the same thing: restoring the bodies natural balance.

Shen Nung, 456-538 AD, the compiler of the Shen-Mung-Pen-Tsao-Ching: The Shen-Nung Pharmacopeia, stated "Ginseng is a tonic to the five viscera, quieting the animal spirits, stabilizing the soul, preventing fear, expelling the vicious energies, brightening the eye and improving vision, opening up the heart benefitting the understanding, and if taken for some time will invigorate the body and prolong life." There is evidence that by this time ginseng had long been a cultivated crop.

Ginseng root is also known as Man Root, which is its original Asian name. This is in reference to the uncannily human appearance of many ginseng roots before the tendrils have been stripped off, and ginseng root can resemble the human figure in an astonishing variety of easily recognizable postures. Standing, running, sitting, leaping, and many more poses are all frequently found, particularly in Korean ginseng. Much American ginseng root is also strikingly similar to the human shape.

Wild ginseng root is becoming rarer in the United States, and wild ginseng root has been virtually eliminated in Asia. Fortunately, the cultivated root has demonstrated all the potency of the wild variety, although the wild root still commands a higher price. The picking of wild ginseng root has become strictly controlled, not only in Asia but also in Canada and America.

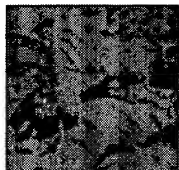
Control over the harvesting of wild ginseng is nothing new. For 300 years in recent Chinese history during the Qing dynasty, 1644-1911, there were strict penalties including flogging, imprisonment, and exile for collecting or selling wild ginseng.

Ginseng was discovered growing in Quebec in 1715 by a Jesuit missionary. The root was subsequently exported to the existing market, starting in 1717. In 1824, 375 tons of ginseng were exported to Asian markets from the US.

Cultivated ginseng production, particularly in Canada and the US, continues to fill the growing need, exporting many hundreds of tons of ginseng each year. You can get fresh dried ginseng root, in its purest form, with greater ease than ever before in history due to the modern convenience of the internet, and instant ordering over the web. Check out products page for more information, and our ordering page for complete secure ordering instructions!

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## History of Ginseng

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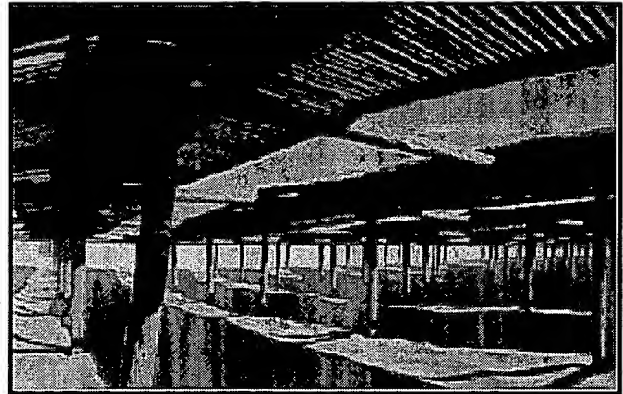
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## ■ History of Ginseng

## Asia

*Panax ginseng* was discovered over 5000 years ago in the mountains of Manchuria, China. Although probably originally used as food, it quickly became revered for its strength-giving and rejuvenating powers and its

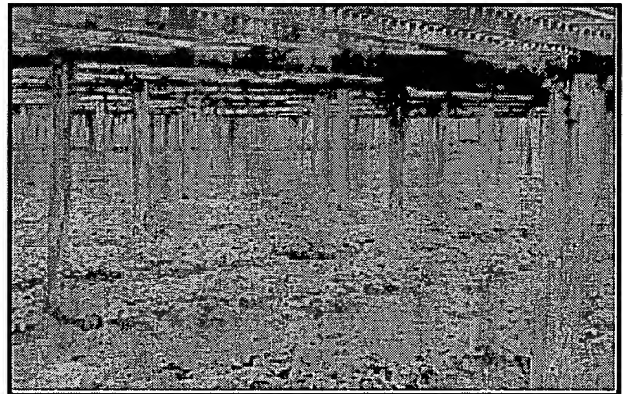
human shape became a powerful symbol of divine harmony on earth. By the third century AD. China's demand for ginseng created international trade in the root allowing Korea to obtain Chinese silk and medicine in exchange for wild ginseng. By the 1900s, the demand for ginseng outstripped the available wild supply and Korea began the commercial cultivation of ginseng which continues to this day.



## North America

The commercial harvesting of American ginseng began in Canada in 1716 after a Jesuit priest, working among the Iroquois, heard of the root so valued by the Chinese. Reasoning that the environment of French Canada closely resembled

that of Manchuria, he began searching for examples of this wondrous herb growing in the Canadian hardwood forests and after three months of searching he discovered American ginseng growing near Montreal. Thus began a vigorous export of ginseng from Canada to China where American ginseng quickly became much in demand. Before long ginseng was discovered growing in the wild in New England, New York, Massachusetts and Vermont and many an American fortune was made on the ginseng trade.





By the end of the nineteenth century, however, the wild root was near extinction in North America due to over-harvesting and the destruction of its natural habitat. At this point, farmers began cultivating the sensitive plant and after numerous failed attempts the

first harvests of cultivated ginseng reached the market. From 1880 to 1960 the ginseng trade experienced many ups and downs for reasons as diverse as blight and world wars but since the 1960s the trade in American ginseng has grown steadily.

In the 1990s more North Americans than ever have been converted by the wonderful and various curative properties of ginseng and in addition to the trade still flourishing with China, there is a sizeable domestic market for the root:



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The Ginseng Company provides the following articles as an informational resource about ginseng. This information has been made available by the American Botanical Council and the Institute for Traditional Medicine.

## Eleuthero

**Latin Name:** *Eleutherococcus senticosus* (syn. *Acanthopanax senticosus*)

**Pharmacopeial Name:** Eleutherococci radix

**Other Names:** Siberian ginseng, Ussurian thorny pepperbush, Taiga root

**Eleuthero** is sold in the United States as "Siberian Ginseng" (*E. senticosus* (Rupr. et Maxim.) Maxim., family Araliaceae). It is known in China as *ci wu jia*. The plant is a spiny-stemmed shrub found in northeast Asia and Japan, and is presently prescribed for medicinal use in France, Germany, Russia, and China... [More](#)

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## Panax Ginseng Root

**Latin Name:** *Panax ginseng*

**Pharmacopeial Name:** Ginseng radix

**Other Names:** Asian Ginseng, Chinese ginseng, Korean ginseng, true ginseng

**Panax Ginseng** is a slow-growing perennial herb native to the mountain forests of northeastern China, Korea, and the far eastern regions of the Russian Federation. In China, the natural range for ginseng extends from Hebei Province to the three northeastern provinces of Liaoning, Jilin, and Heilongjiang... [More](#)

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## Ginseng Scientific Studies

by Subhuti Dharmananda, Ph.D.,

Director, Institute for Traditional Medicine, Portland, Oregon

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# Ginseng

(*Panax quinquefolius*)

<b>Folk Names</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Parts Used</b>
Sang, Wonder of the World Root	Masculine	Root
<b>Planet</b>	<b>Element</b>	<b>Deities</b>
Sun	Fire	

## Powers

Love, Wishes, Healing, Beauty, Protection, Lust

## Magickal Uses

The root is carried to attract love, as well as guard one's health, to draw money, and to ensure sexual potency. Ginseng will also bring beauty to all who carry it.

Burn Ginseng to ward off evil spirits and to break hexes and curses.

A tea of ginseng is used as a powerful lust-inducing drink, whether alone or mixed with other like herbs.

Hold a ginseng root in your hands, visualize your wish into the root, and throw it into running water. Or, carve your wish onto a root and toss into the water.

Ginseng can be a substitute for the mandrake.

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Ginseng is the general name of two separate plants, both members of the genus *Panax*. The herbaceous Chinese ginseng (*Panax ginseng*) and the American ginseng (*Panax quinquefolius*) are both in the family *Araliaceae*.

## Steven Foster Group

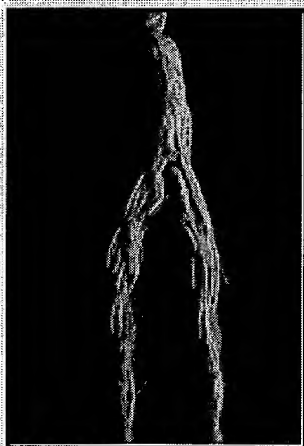


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## Ginseng

*Panax ginseng*,  
*Eleutherococcus senticosus*,  
*Panax quinquefolius*

## Ginseng & Herbal Energizers

by Steven Foster

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When I'm traveling the East or West coasts, most people just don't get it when I tell them I live in Arkansas. With Bill and Hillary in the White House, for better or worse, at least people have heard of Arkansas, and even a few people now know where the state is. Having grown-up in Maine, I was thrilled when my botanical mentor took me to see wild American ginseng growing in one of its four Maine populations. In fact, I came to really love those woods of southern Maine that seemed to have a more interesting array of medicinal plants than the coniferous woods of the state. That's one of the reasons I moved to Arkansas. I found the flora more interesting than New England, especially the medicinal plants. Today, in the third week of March, I spoke with my mother in Maine, who complained about the snow storm they received yesterday. I delighted in telling her that it was a sunny day close to 80 deg. F. here in Arkansas, and that I was going to have to mow the lawn for the first time this year. That's another reason I chose Arkansas as my adult home.

There's one more reason I moved to Arkansas. The people are friendly. You can talk to anyone. The opportunity to learn new things is enormous. And there's a good deal of American ginseng here. I've been in the process of having my office remodeled. Seems that everyone here who is involved in a nine-to-five construction job also does a little hunting and fishing, and at the right time of year digs a little "seng." They all seem to have a little stash. My plumber brought over a little bag of seng roots to share with me while we took an afternoon break. He told me stories of just how he and his friends use topo



maps and soil maps to find seng habitat, then they go in and harvest the roots. He is real careful to make sure that he doesn't dig a plant until it produces mature fruits, so he can replant the seed, and how he and his friend take only a little each year. That way they can go to the same spot year after year and dig a little seng. He made \$20,000 last year digging Echinacea root and ginseng.

Talking with my local friends, I have learned alot about ginseng, where it grows, how it grows, and how to use it. Some of these fellows have a highly specialized knowledge, recognizing genetic variants that aren't even recorded by scientists. I learned through these conversations that if you are driving long distances at night, you get a little extra energy to help keep you awake by chewing a little ginseng root. I keep a ginseng root on the dash board of the car when traveling long distances. Beats a cup of coffee, too. The effect lasts longer, and keeps you more alert.

Of course, today, here in the midwest, virtually every quick stop convenience store now has ginseng extract available at the countertop. You can even get ginseng at discount department stores. It seems that ginseng has found its way into mainstream American culture. It's about energy. We are all looking for more energy.

As spiritual beings in a physical body, more often than not, we find the concept of energy a mystery, especially in trying to figure out how it effects us directly. Or better yet, how to get more. The *American Heritage Dictionary* defines energy as vigor or power in action, vitality and intensity of expression, or the capacity for action of accomplishment. The word root is from the Latin *energia* or Greek, *energōs*, coined by Aristotle, to mean "active at work." To be active at work, we have to be able to adapt to conditions, adapt to stress, adapt to our environment, adapt to the people around us, adapt to the underlying events of our lives that effect us subconsciously.

When it comes to understanding our own energy, we must consider how we can best understand how we program information into our bodies, into our lives. How we adapt is crucial. I strive for an energy level that I remember from childhood. Waking up and stretching every morning with delight, joy and full of energy, ready for what ever the day will bring. As an aging baby-boomer, my body doesn't quite keep up with the memories.

How I adapt depends upon the choices I make. A little stretch, an aerobic walk, quiet meditation, sitting by the pond and watching the dragon flies go about their morning, helps me rediscover my energy reserves. The Chinese call it qi or vital energy. It moves through us, it animates us. In *The Webb that has no Weaver*, Ted Kaptchuk offers that perhaps the best way to think of Qi is as matter on the verge of becoming energy or energy at the point of materialization. The nature of Qi or a conceptualization of it is beyond the speculation of modern or ancient Chinese texts. Instead, Kaptchuk tells us, the Chinese perceive Qi for what it does.

There are two ways of thinking about herbs as it relates to energy. You can take the pharmacological approach - sledge hammer wake-up call - in the form of central nervous system stimulants. These mostly include herbs that contain stimulant alkaloids such as ephedra, caffeine, nicotine, theobromine and others, all of which are ingredients in the major stimulants used in our society. The other approach is to gain energy by enhancing your ability to adapt to your internal and external circumstances. This is where herbs like ginseng come into play. Historically called tonics, ginseng is now referred to as an adaptogen.

The late, Prof. I. I. Brekhman, M.D., the leading twentieth century researcher on eleuthero or Siberian ginseng (*Eleutherococcus senticosus*) defined an adaptogen based on three inclusive criteria. 1. A substance which "must be innocuous and cause minimal disorders in the physiological functions of an organism." 2. A substance which "must have a nonspecific action," such as the ability of *E. senticosus* extracts to modulate stress and improve performance under a wide variety of stressful conditions. 3. A substance which "usually has a normalizing action irrespective of the direction of the pathologic state."

The term ginseng suggests that it helps us by helping to provide energy. *Gin* is the equivalent of the Chinese word for "man" while *seng* is very closely translated to "essence." In a traditional context, ginseng means the crystallization of the essence of the earth in the form of a man. According to ginseng botanical specialist Dr. Shiu Ying Hu, "It represents the vital spirit of the earth that dwells in a root. It is the manifestation of the spiritual phase of nature in material form."

My root digger friends in Arkansas refer to ginseng as "seng." Seng is also a slang term used by Chinese root diggers to refer to any fleshy root stock harvested as a tonic in traditional Chinese medicine. While there are dozens of "seng" producing plants, there is only one "gin-seng." Of course, in the context of the American herb market, the term ginseng has evolved to a much more ambiguous word. *Eleutherococcus senticosus* was never referred to historically as "Siberian ginseng" until it was first marketed in the United States in the late 1960s and early 1970s. It's important to understand what ginseng is and isn't. Just because a plant is in the botanical family known as the ginseng family, does not mean that it can be used as an adaptogen.

Generally speaking, there are three plants that are adaptogens from the ginseng family currently in the American market. These are eleuthero or Siberian ginseng (*Eleutherococcus senticosus*), American ginseng (*Panax quinquefolius*) and Chinese ginseng (*Panax ginseng*). Another emerging adaptogen in the herb market, which has no relationship to ginseng, is schisandra.

The vast majority of scientific research, including pharmacological and clinical studies conducted over the past forty years, on ginseng has involved *Panax ginseng* Chinese ginseng (also called Korean or Asian ginseng). Research has focused on radioprotective, antitumor, antiviral, and metabolic effects; antioxidant activities; nervous system and reproductive performance; effects on cholesterol and lipid metabolism, and endocrinological activity. Research also suggests that ginseng has non-specific immunostimulatory activity similar to that of Echinacea. The active constituents of ginseng are saponins called. According to recent reports, there are at least 18 saponins found in Asian ginseng. American and Asian ginseng both contain different combinations of ginsenosides which can in part explain their different activities as understood by Asian traditional medicine practitioners.

Most reliable clinical studies on Asian ginseng have been conducted in Europe. These studies have generally involved extracts of Asian ginseng standardized to 4 percent and 7 percent of ginsenosides. Results included a shortening of time to react to visual and auditory stimuli, increased respiratory quotient, increased alertness, power of concentration, grasp of abstract concepts, and increases in visual and motor coordination. These are all measures of adaptogenic response.



The German health authorities allow Asian ginseng products to be labeled as a tonic for invigoration to treat fatigue, reduced work capacity and concentration, and as a tonic during convalescence. Daily dosage is 1 to 2 g of root in appropriate formulations is allowed.

There seems to be general agreement in the medicinal plant scientific community about the value of Eleuthero as an adaptogen. Since the 1960s dozens of clinical studies have been conducted on eleuthero which shows its value as an adaptogen. The studies, though criticized for lacking proper controls, were conducted in the former Soviet Union and involved over 6,000 individuals. While the pharmacological explanations of exactly how eleuthero extracts work in humans is not clearly understood, there is extensive animal and human evidence to support the adaptogenic qualities of Eleuthero extract. Studies and experience also confirm its safety. Currently the German government allows eleuthero to be used similarly to *Panax ginseng* as a tonic for invigoration and fortification during times of fatigue and debility; for declining work capacity and concentration, as well as during convalescence. It is used for up to three months with a repeated course if necessary. The dose given is equivalent to 1 g of the powdered root.

Schisandra fruits, a rising star among adaptogens in the scientific literature, yet still a sleeper in the American herb market, has a bright future. Like *Panax ginseng* Schisandra is considered to be adaptogenic, somewhat weaker, but also very safe. Laboratory experiments coupled with clinical trials confirm that it helps to improve brain efficiency, increase work capacity, stimulate the central nervous system, improve reflexes, build strength, and increase endurance of healthy individuals. Research suggests a calmativ effect on the central nervous and that Schisandra can counteract the stimulatory effect of caffeine. Studies on cardiovascular effects have shown that it helps to normalize blood pressure. It has been shown to have a cough suppressing and expectorant effect in laboratory animals. Schisandra is considered to be strongly antioxidant.

An herb that will increase my energy while having a calmativ effect on my nervous system sounds like the perfect adaptogen. Maybe there is no such wonder herb. I will have to continue to get plenty of sleep, eat right, reduce stress in my life, and just take care of myself. As much as anything, having energy is a state of mind.

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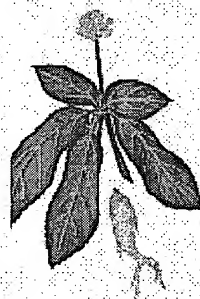
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# Ginseng



By Jim Long

My first experience with American ginseng was twenty years ago. I was hiking with a friend in the Buffalo National River area, high above the river on a path known as the Goat Trail. We stopped hiking for a few minutes and rested on a tiny rock ledge overlooking the river valley. My companion reached into his coat pocket and pulled out a white, wrinkled piece of root. Breaking off some, he handed the larger portion to me.

"Here, break off a piece and chew it slowly."

"What is it?" I asked, as I reached in my pocket for my knife.

"American ginseng," was his reply. "And you should never cut ginseng with a knife. It's considered sacred by some cultures, so I observe that by never cutting the root with a knife. Break off a piece," he continued, "or just bite off a small portion."

American ginseng is used by some people as a stimulant when they are tired, "Sort of like drinking a cup of coffee," he explained. "It will help you maintain your energy level as we continue hiking."

As I sat chewing the pungent, earthy root, I watched an eagle riding on air currents over the river far below. Snow outlined the river in places and steam rose from the rapids. The entire river, hundreds of feet below us, was just a silvery ribbon, wrinkled by the white foam of rapids every quarter mile or so. The taste of American ginseng always evokes for me that first introduction to this remarkable, ancient plant.

American ginseng is a native plant of the United States and Canada, and other varieties of ginseng are found in China and other countries. The Chinese have records of medicinal uses of ginseng dating over a thousand years. They use ginseng as an equalizer, rather than a simple stimulant, because of a belief that illness is caused by the lack of equilibrium between the body's systems.

Native American cultures have relied upon American ginseng for energy, and as an overall tonic and balancing agent. They carried it on long journeys, much like my friend had on our hike, biting off tiny, pea-sized bites as daily energy regulators.

American ginseng was once found in rich woods from Minnesota to Maine, south to Georgia and west into Oklahoma. As the Chinese exhausted their own indigenous ginseng supplies, they turned to the United States and by the 1940s, the root was being wildcrafted and exported in large quantities to the Orient.

Wildcrafting, the practice of finding and digging roots from wild plant colonies, was once a good income-producer in rural areas of American ginseng's natural growing regions. But over the years, root buyers have made native colonies virtually extinct.

American ginseng is now cultivated in many areas, particularly in states such as Wisconsin, Minnesota, Georgia, Illinois, Virginia, and West Virginia, where the growing conditions are ideal. It requires a rich, loamy, woodland soil with lots of humus. Conditions that keep the roots cool and evenly moist, are necessary. The plant grows naturally in cool, moist but not wet, valleys and on north-facing slopes of hillsides, in shade. It can be found in the early West Virginia autumn under the shade of walnut trees.

Commercial growers cultivate and grow American ginseng in raised beds, under shade cloth. Plants grown in those conditions must have many applications of fertilizer and automatic watering systems, and grow more quickly and straighter than wildcrafted plants.

1 | 2

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## gingerbread

2. cheap, showy ornamentation, as cheap fancy carvings on furniture, front porches, etc.
- gin'ger-bread** (-bred), *a.* cheap and showy; tawdry; gaudy.
- gin'ger-bread plum**, the fruit of the gingerbread tree.
- gin'ger-bread tree**, 1. the doom palm.  
2. *Parinarium macrophyllum*, an African tree bearing the fruit known as the gingerbread plum.
- gin'ger-bread work**, same as *gingerbread*, sense 2.
- gin'ger grass**, 1. *Andropogon nardus*, an East Indian grass from which an aromatic oil is derived.  
2. *Panicum glutinosum*, a coarse, strong grass of the West Indies.
- gin'ger-li-ness**, *n.* cautious or fastidious quality.
- gin'ger-ly**, *adv.* [ginger (perh. from OFr. *genzor*, compar. of *gent*, delicate), and -ly.] cautiously; carefully; timidly.
- gin'ger-ly**, *a.* cautious; careful; timid.
- gin'ger-snap**, *n.* a crisp, spicy cookie flavored with ginger and molasses.
- gin'ger-y**, *a.* 1. like or flavored with ginger; spicy; pungent.  
2. sandy or reddish in color.
- ging'hām** (ging'ām), *n.* [D. *gingang* (Fr. *gingan*); prob. from Malay *gingan*, striped (cloth); transmission to Europe prob. via D.] a yard-dyed cotton cloth, usually woven in stripes, checks, or plaids: it is used for aprons, house dresses, etc.
- ging'hām**, *a.* made of gingham.
- gin'gī-lī**, *n.* [Hind. *jīnālī*.] 1. sesame seed.  
2. the oil of this seed.  
Also spelled *gingeli*, *gingelly*.
- gin'gī-vāl** (or *jīn'ji-vāl*), *a.* [L. *gingivā*, gums.] of the gums; alveolar.
- gin'gī-vāl**, *n.* an alveolar consonant.
- gin'gī-vī-tis**, *n.* [L. *gingivā*, gums, and -itis.] an inflamed condition of the gums.
- ging'kō**, *n.* *pl.* *ging'kōes*, a ginkgo.
- Gin'gly-mō'dī**, *n. pl.* [Gr. *ginglymos*, a hinge, and *eidōs*, form.] an order of fishes of the *Ganoidae*.
- gin'gly-mold**, **gin'gly-form**, *a.* of or like a ginglymus.
- gin'gly-mos-tō-mold**, *a.* [Gr. *ginglymos*, a hinge, *stoma*, mouth, and *eidōs*, form.] of or like the *Ginglymostomidae*, a family of sharks in which the lip folds seem to hinge together.
- gin'gly-mus**, *n.* *pl.* *gin'gly-mī*, [Gr. *ginglymos*, a hinge-joint.] in anatomy, a hingelike joint; an articulation in which each bone partly receives, and is partly received by, the other, so as to admit only of flexion and extension in one plane, as the elbow joint.
- gin'house**, *n.* a building where cotton is ginned.
- gink'gō** (gīn'kō), *n.* *pl.* *gīn'kōes*, [Japan. *ginkgo*, from Chin. *yīn-hing*, silver apricot.] a large tree, *Ginkgo biloba*, with fan-shaped leaves and edible yellow fruit, native to northern China and Japan: also *ginkgo*.
- gin mill**, a saloon. [Slang.]
- ginn**, *n.* *jinn*.
- gin'nēr**, *n.* a person who gins cotton.
- gin'net**, *n.* a jennet. [Obs.]
- gin'ny car'riage** (-rij), *ginnny*, prob. variant of *Jenny*, a personal name.] a small, strong railroad car to carry materials.
- gin rum'my**, a card game in which each player is dealt ten cards and alternately draws and discards one at a time until successful in arranging the cards in sets of at least three of the same denomination or sequences of at least three in a suit with a total surplus of not more than ten points, at which time he may lay his cards face upward and end the deal. If a player's surplus is lower than his opponent's, he wins the difference in number of points, but if not, he loses the difference plus a previously fixed penalty. There is a fixed premium for winning each hand, as well as for being able to call "gin" and lay down one's cards without any surplus points.
- gin'seng**, *n.* [Chin. *jen shen*.]  
1. an herb with a thick, forked, aromatic root: some species are found in China and North America.  
2. the root of this plant, used medicinally by the Chinese.
- gin'shop**, *n.* a saloon.
- Giō'cōn'dā**, **Lū** (or *jō-kōn'dā*), *n.* [It., lit., the cheerful one.]  
1. a portrait by Leonardo da Vinci, more commonly called *Mona Lisa*.  
2. an Italian opera (1876) by Ponchielli.

- giō'cō'sō**, *a.* [It., from L. *jocosus*, playful.] gay; playful: a term used in music.
- gip**, *v. t.*; gipped (gip't), *pl.*, *pp.*; gipping, *ppr.* to eviscerate, as fish.
- gip**, *n.*, *v. t.* and *v. i.* same as *gyp*.
- gi-pon'**, **gi-pōun'**, *n.* same as *jupon*.
- gip'sy**, *n.*; *pl.* *gip'sies*, same as *gypsy*.
- gip'sy**, *a.* same as *gypsy*.
- gip'sy**, *v. i.*; gipsied, *pl.*, *pp.*; gipsying, *ppr.* same as *gypsy*.
- gip'sy herb**, **mōth**, **winch**, etc., see following *gypsy*.
- gi-raffe'**, *n.*; *pl.* *gi-raffes* or *gi-raffe*, [Fr. *giraffe*; Sp. Port. *girafa*, from Ar. *zarāf*, *zarāfa*, a giraffe.]  
1. a large, cud-chewing animal of Africa, *Giraffa camelopardalis*, with a very long neck in which the seven vertebrae are elongated, and long legs, the forelegs being of greater length. The giraffe often grows to a height of eighteen feet and is the tallest of existing animals. It has two bony excrescences on its head resembling horns. Its color is usually light fawn marked with darker spots. Also called *camelopard*.  
2. [G-] the constellation Camelopard.  
3. an eighteenth-century spinet.  
4. a special type of car used on inclines in mining, one end being higher than the other.
- gir'an-dōle**, **gi-ran'dō-lā**, *n.* [Fr. *girandole*; It. *girandola*, a chandelier, a fire wheel, from *girare*, L. *gyrare*, to turn, from *gyrus*, a circle.]  
1. a branched candlestick.  
2. a firework rotating while burning.  
3. a revolving water jet.  
4. a pendant or earring with small stones grouped around a larger one.
- gir'a-sol**, **gir'a-sōle**, *n.* [Fr. *girasol*, from It. *girasole*, the fire opal, a sunflower; *girare*, to turn, and *sole*, sun; L. *gyrare*, to turn, and *sol*, *solis*, sun.]  
1. a tall sunflower with edible, potato-like roots: usually called *Jerusalem artichoke*. [Rare.]  
2. a variety of opal that has a reddish gleam in a bright light; fire opal.  
Also spelled *girosol*.
- gird**, *n.* 1. a twinge or pang; a sudden spasm which resembles the stroke of a rod or the pressure of a band. [Obs.]  
2. a gibe. [Archaic.]
- gird**, *v. t.* and *v. i.* [ME. *girden*, *gerden*, to strike, thrust, smite, from *gerd*; AS. *gyrd*, a rod.]  
1. to strike. [Obs.]  
2. to taunt; to gibe; to sneer.
- gird**, *v. t.*; girt or girded, *pl.*, *pp.*; girding, *ppr.* [ME. *girden*, *gerden*; AS. *gyrdan*, to bind.]  
1. to encircle with a belt or band.  
2. to fasten with a belt or band.  
3. to surround; to encircle; to enclose.  
4. to clothe; to dress; to furnish; to equip.  
5. to prepare (oneself) for action.
- gird'er**, *n.* one who gibes or girds.
- gird'er**, *n.* a large beam, usually horizontal, of timber or steel, for supporting the joists of a floor, the framework of a building, the superstructure of a bridge, etc.  
*bowstring girder*; see under *bowstring*.  
*half-lattice girder*; a girder formed by two horizontal beams joined by bars set diagonally without crossing.  
*lattice girder*; a girder consisting of two horizontal beams united by diagonal crossing bars, somewhat resembling wooden lattice-work.
- gird'ing**, *n.* a girdle. [Obs.]
- gird'le**, *n.* [ME. *girdel*, *gerdel*; AS. *gyrdel*, a girdle, from *gyrdan*, to gird.]  
1. a band or belt; something drawn round the waist, and tied or buckled; as, a *girdle* of fine linen; a leathern *girdle*.  
2. anything that surrounds or encircles.  
3. a light, flexible, corsetlike garment, for supporting or molding the waist and hips.  
4. the rim of a cut gem.  
5. a ring around the trunk of a tree, made by removing bark.



GIRAFFE  
(*Giraffa camelopardalis*)

## gismondine

6. the zodiac; also, the equator.
7. a thin stratum of rock in mining.
8. in anatomy, a bony structure to which a limb is attached, as the pelvic *girdle*, formed by the bones of the hips, and the thoracic *girdle*, formed by the clavicles and scapulae.
9. a seaweed of the genus *Laminaria*.
- gird'le**, *v. t.*; girdled, *pl.*, *pp.*; girdling, *ppr.*  
1. to bind with a belt or sash; to gird.  
2. to encircle.  
3. to make a circular incision in the bark of (a tree).
- gird'ler**, *n.* 1. a maker of girdles.  
2. a person or thing that girdles, or encircles.  
3. a beetle that girdles the twig in which it has laid its eggs: the larva thus has decaying wood for food; as, a twig *girdler*, genus *Onocideres*.
- gird'le-stead** (-sted), *n.* the part of the body where the girdle is worn. [Obs.]
- gird'le wheel**, a kind of spinning wheel.
- gird'kin**, *n.* gherkin. [Obs.]
- girl**, *n.* [ME. *gírle*, *gerle*, a young person, either girl or boy, from L.G. *gōr*, masc., a boy, *gōre*, f., a girl.]  
1. a female child; hence, any young unmarried woman.  
2. a maidservant.  
3. a sweetheart. [Colloq.]  
4. a woman of any age, married or single.  
5. a child. [Obs.]  
6. a roebuck less than two years old. [Obs.]
- girl guide**, a member of a British organization (*Girl Guides*) that is like the Girl Scouts.
- girl'hood**, *n.* the time or state of being a girl; also, girls collectively.
- girl'ish**, *a.* 1. relating to girlhood or to a girl; as, *girlish* hours.  
2. resembling or characteristic of girls; suitable for a girl or girlhood; as, *girlish* manners.
- girl'ish-ly**, *adv.* in the manner of a girl.
- girl'ish-ness**, *n.* the manners of a girl.
- girl scout**, a member of the Girl Scouts.
- Girl Scouts**, an organization founded by Juliette Low in Savannah, Georgia, in 1912 (as *Girl Guides*) to provide healthful, character-building activities for girls.
- girn**, *v. i.* to grin. [Obs.]
- girn**, *n.*, *v. i.* and *v. t.*, snarl. [Brit. Dial.]
- Gi-ronde'** (or Fr. *zhē-rōnd'*), *n.* [so called because led by deputies from *Gironde*, a department of France on the southwestern coast.] a French political party (1791-1793) that advocated moderate republican principles: it was suppressed by the Jacobins.
- Gi-ron'dist**, *n.* a member of the Gironde.
- Gi-ron'dist**, *a.* relating to the Gironde or the Girondists.
- gir'ō-sol**, *n.* same as *girasol*.
- gir'rock**, *n.* a species of garfish.
- girt**, past tense and past participle of *gird* (to encircle).
- girt**, *v. t.* [from *gird*.] 1. to gird; to girdle.  
2. to fasten with a girdle, belt, etc.  
3. to measure the girth of.
- girt**, *v. i.* to measure in girth.
- girt**, *n.* same as *girth*.
- girt**, *a.* moored by two cables to two anchors placed on opposite sides, to prevent a vessel from swinging.
- girth**, *n.* [ME. *girth*, *gerth*; Ice. *gjörðh*, a girdle, girth.]  
1. a strap or cinch used in fastening a saddle or load, as upon a horse or mule.  
2. the measure of anything cylindrical or resembling a cylinder in form; specifically, the waist measure of a person; as, a man of ample height and *girth*.  
3. a girdle.  
4. the strap, usually of leather, passing about the pulley in a hand press, which conveys motion to the carriage.
- girth**, *v. t.* 1. to bind with a girth; to gird.  
2. to girdle; to encircle; to surround.
- girth**, *v. i.* to measure in girth.
- girt'line**, *n.* a rope used in the process of rigging a ship, to lift the rigging up to the mast-head.
- gi-särme'**, *n.* [ME.; OFr. from O.H.G. *getisarn*, lit., weeding iron, from *getan*, to weed, and *isarn*, iron.] a battle-ax or halberd with a long shaft, formerly carried by foot soldiers.
- gise**, *v. i.* to feed; to pasture. [Obs.]
- gise**, *n.* guise. [Obs.]
- gis'el**, *n.* a pledge. [Obs.]
- gis'lēr**, *n.* [etym. uncertain.] a parasite of salmon.
- gis-mon'dine**, **gis-mon'dite**, *n.* [named after C. G. *Gismond*, an Italian mineralogist.] a mineral silicate of calcium and aluminum.